

# Australian Brandenburg Orchestra

## Haunting Handel

**PAUL DYER** artistic director and harpsichord

**FIONA CAMPBELL** mezzo soprano

**KIRSTEN BARRY** baroque oboe

### SYDNEY

**City Recital Hall Angel Place**

Friday 13, Saturday 14, Wednesday 18, Friday 20, Saturday 21 May all at 7pm

### MELBOURNE

**Melbourne Recital Centre**

Sunday 22 May at 5pm, Monday 23 May at 7pm

**This concert will last approximately  
2 hours including interval.**

**We kindly request that you switch off all electronic devices during the performance.**



Australian Government

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



NSW Communities arts nsw

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW.



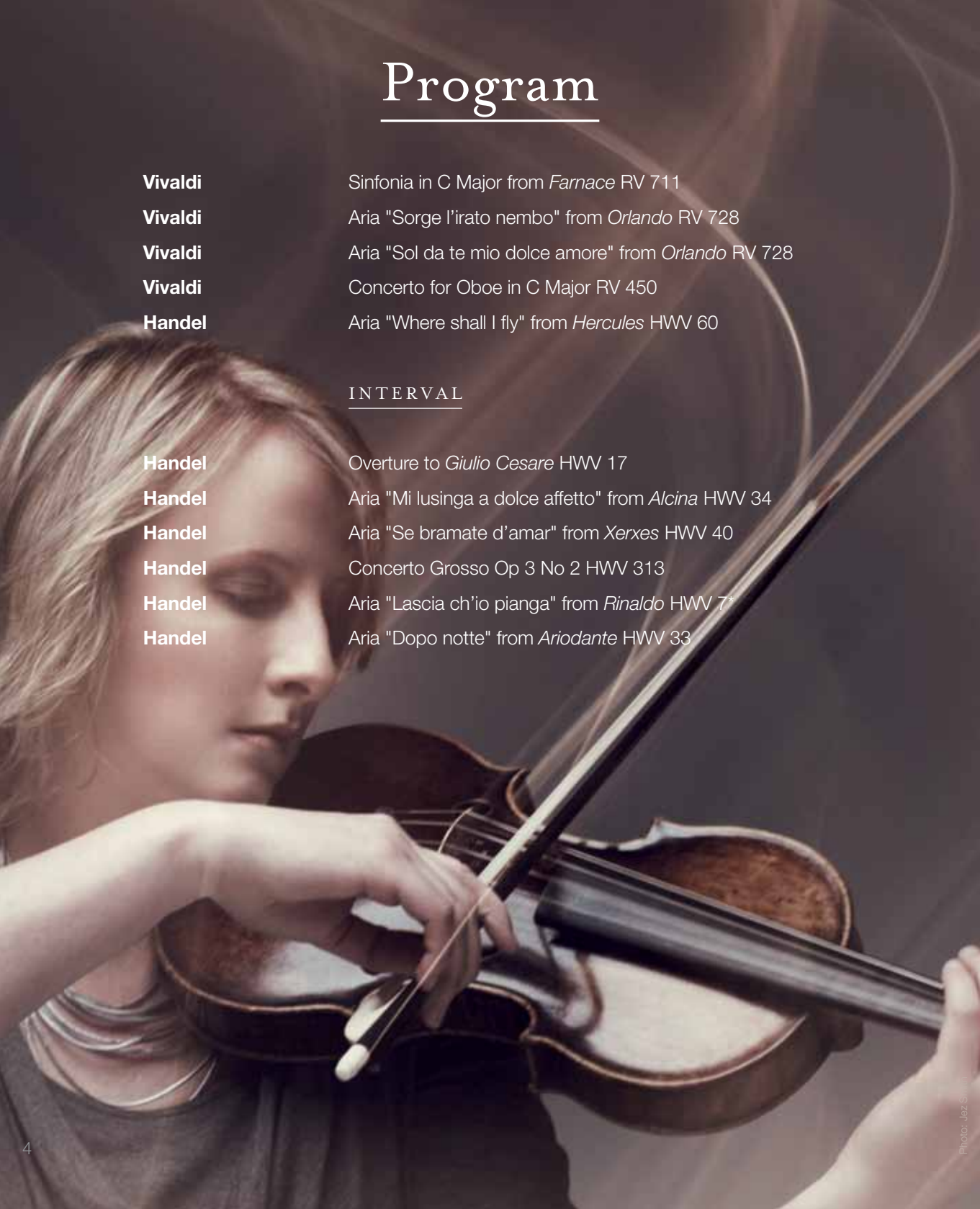
AUSTRALIAN  
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ARTS GROUP



MACQUARIE

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

# Program



<b>Vivaldi</b>	Sinfonia in C Major from <i>Farnace</i> RV 711
<b>Vivaldi</b>	Aria "Sorge l'irato nembo" from <i>Orlando</i> RV 728
<b>Vivaldi</b>	Aria "Sol da te mio dolce amore" from <i>Orlando</i> RV 728
<b>Vivaldi</b>	Concerto for Oboe in C Major RV 450
<b>Handel</b>	Aria "Where shall I fly" from <i>Hercules</i> HWV 60

## INTERVAL

<b>Handel</b>	Overture to <i>Giulio Cesare</i> HWV 17
<b>Handel</b>	Aria "Mi lusinga a dolce affetto" from <i>Alcina</i> HWV 34
<b>Handel</b>	Aria "Se bramate d'amar" from <i>Xerxes</i> HWV 40
<b>Handel</b>	Concerto Grosso Op 3 No 2 HWV 313
<b>Handel</b>	Aria "Lascia ch'io pianga" from <i>Rinaldo</i> HWV 7*
<b>Handel</b>	Aria "Dopo notte" from <i>Ariodante</i> HWV 33

# Haunting Handel

FIONA CAMPBELL

*mezzo soprano*

AUSTRALIAN

BRANDENBURG ORCHESTRA

*The musicians on period instruments*

## VIOLIN 1

Rachael Beesley  
**(Guest Concertmaster)**  
Julia Fredersdorff  
Brendan Joyce  
Matt Bruce<sup>+</sup>  
Miranda Hutton

## VIOLIN 2

Ben Dollman<sup>\*,+</sup>  
Cath Shugg  
Lorraine Moxey<sup>1</sup>  
Skye McIntosh

## VIOLA

Monique O'Dea<sup>\*,2</sup>  
Shelley Sørensen  
Marianne Yeomans

## CELLO

Jamie Hey<sup>\*,+</sup>  
Anthea Cottee  
James Beck

## DOUBLE BASS

Kirsty McCahon<sup>\*,+</sup>

## THEORBO/GUITAR

Tommie Andersson<sup>\*,+</sup>

## FLUTE

Melissa Farrow<sup>\*,+</sup>

## OBOE

Kirsten Barry<sup>\*,+</sup>  
Adam Masters

## BASSOON

Peter Moore<sup>\*,3</sup>

## HARPSICHORD

Paul Dyer<sup>\*</sup>

\* Denotes section leader

+ Denotes Brandenburg core musician

<sup>1</sup> Lorraine Moxey appears courtesy  
Kinross Wolaroi School, Orange (staff)

<sup>2</sup> Monique O'Dea appears courtesy of  
Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney (staff)

<sup>3</sup> Peter Moore appears courtesy of The School of Music,  
University of Western Australia

Harpsichord preparation by Geoffrey Pollard in Sydney  
and Alastair McAllister in Melbourne..



## PAUL DYER

### *artistic director and conductor*

Paul Dyer is one of Australia's leading specialists in period performance styles. A charismatic leader, he founded the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra in 1990 as a natural outcome of his experience as a performer and teacher of baroque and classical music, and he has been the Orchestra's Artistic Director since that time. Paul has devoted his performing life to the harpsichord, fortepiano and chamber organ as well as conducting the Brandenburg Orchestra and Choir.

Having completed postgraduate studies in solo performance with Bob van Asperen at the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague, Paul performed with many major European orchestras and undertook ensemble direction and orchestral studies with Sigiswald Kuijken and Frans Brüggen.

As well as directing the Brandenburg, Paul has a busy schedule appearing as a soloist, continuo player and conductor with many major ensembles, including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Orchestra, Australia Ensemble, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Opera Australia, Australian Youth Orchestra, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, the Pacific Baroque Orchestra, Vancouver, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London.

Paul has performed with many prominent international soloists including Andreas Scholl, Cyndia Sieden, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Andreas Staier, Marc Destrubé, Christoph Prégardien, Hidemi Suzuki, Manfredo Kraemer, Andrew Manze, Yvonne Kenny, Emma Kirkby, Philippe Jaroussky and many others. In 1998 he made his debut in Tokyo with countertenor Derek Lee Ragin, leading an ensemble of Brandenburg Orchestra soloists, and in August 2001 Paul toured the Orchestra to Europe with guest soloist Andreas Scholl, appearing in Vienna, France, Germany and London (at the Proms). As a recitalist, he has toured Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United States, playing in Carnegie Hall in New York.

Paul is an inspiring teacher and has been a staff member at various Conservatories throughout the world. In 1995 he received a Churchill Fellowship and he has won numerous international and national awards for his CD recordings with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and Choir, including the 1998, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2010 ARIA Awards for Best Classical album. Paul is Patron of St Gabriel's School for Hearing Impaired Children. In 2003 Paul was awarded the Australian Centenary Medal for his services to Australian society and the advancement of music and in 2010 the Sydney University Alumni Medal for Professional Achievement.

Photo: Jez Smith

## FIONA CAMPBELL

### *mezzo soprano*



Photo: Steven Godbee

Australian born mezzo soprano Fiona Campbell is an accomplished international performer, recitalist and recording artist. Vocal winner of the ABC Young Performer of the Year Award and the Opera Awards, in the prestigious Australian Singing Competition, Fiona has consistently received wide critical acclaim for her powerful performances and exquisite musicianship.

Fiona sings regularly as a principal artist with the major ensembles and orchestras in Australia and has also appeared with the Brodsky Quartet, Tokyo Philharmonic, Soloists of Royal Opera House Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Prague Chamber Orchestra, Odessa Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Euro-Asian Philharmonic, Glyndebourne

Festival Opera, Opera North, Opera Australia and Pinchgut Opera.

Career highlights include singing several concerts with the legendary tenor José Carreras in Japan and Korea and as his special guest artist in Australia. Fiona has toured regularly with another singing legend, Barbara Bonney, and recently made her debut at Suntory Hall in Tokyo and Cadogan Hall in London with the renowned international soprano.

Many of her recitals for the ABC have been recorded and her discography for ABC Classics includes Mozart's *Idomeneo*, Vivaldi's *Juditha Triumphans*, Early French Cantatas, Classic 100 Opera, and Just Classics 2. Her latest recording, Baroque Duets, has just been released on the new and innovative label Vexations840 and it includes a world premiere recording of a work by Handel. Her long awaited solo album Love, Loss, Lust will also be available later this year.

Great critical acclaim has been received for her portrayals of favourite operatic roles including Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte*, Siebel in *Faust*, Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Venus in *Tannhäuser*, Ruggiero in *Alcina*, Idamante in *Idomeneo*, Vagaus in *Juditha Triumphans*, Erisbe in *L'Ormindo* and she was nominated for a Helpmann Award for her portrayal of Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

In 2011 her busy concert schedule has included performing Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with the Australia Ensemble, and touring with the ACO in their widely acclaimed program *Listen to This* curated by Alex Ross. Later this year Fiona will perform in the world premiere of a new opera *Shimmering Heat*, and sing in Handel's *Messiah* for Sydney Philharmonia Choirs at the Sydney Opera House. Fiona also has an exciting new collaboration with the Australian String Quartet, which they will debut for the Queensland Music Festival prior to extensive festival performances next year.

Fiona is thrilled to be appearing as the guest artist with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra in this May concert series, and considers it a great honour to be the first mezzo soprano invited to sing with the orchestra in 21 years.

# Haunting Handel

*No good opera plot can be sensible, for people do  
not sing when they are feeling sensible.*

W. H. AUDEN

## Opera in the Eighteenth Century

The first half of the eighteenth century saw the spread of Italian opera throughout Europe. The prevailing opera genre was *opera seria* (serious opera), structured around a set of rigid conventions relating to plot, libretto and structure. The main characters were noble, not ordinary people, and as the name implies, the story lines dealt with serious subjects often drawn from classical mythology or ancient history. Every opera had to have its hero and heroine, the *primo uomo* (first man), usually a castrato, and the *prima donna* (first lady), plus another five or six characters of lesser importance.

Italian singers travelled throughout Europe and were especially drawn to London with its active musical life and the possibility of earning large sums of money. The most famous and fabulously wealthy opera singers were the castrati, forerunners of today's rock stars, who were feted by royalty, swooned over by women, and even had fan clubs dedicated to them. "One God, one Farinelli!" a woman cried out during a performance in London.

Until the eighteenth century European society generally took a dim view of women on stage: to appear as a singer or actress was tantamount to prostitution. In regions of Italy under the Pope's control women were not allowed to appear on stage, so castrati played the female roles. The professionalism and musical skill of female singers was considered below that of men: women could not have music lessons without compromising their honour and so could not acquire similar musical skills. The rise of *opera seria* and virtuosic writing for women saw the emergence of female singers as famous as the castrati, and societal attitudes began to change. Many *opera seria* plots revolved around disguise and mistaken identity, and women were sometimes required to sing male roles, known as travesty or "pants" roles. Some women specialised in them, although one, Vittoria Tesi, refused in 1738 to sing any more of them because "acting a male part is bad for her health".

An Italian opera in this period was in three acts and consisted of a series of arias linked by recitative (sung speech), which told the story and propelled the action. Each singer had to have the number of arias that the status of their character demanded, regardless of their importance to the overall storyline. The *primo uomo* and *prima donna* usually each had seven or eight arias, with three or four for the singer with the least important character.

The arias allowed the characters to express their emotional reaction to what had just taken place, or more commonly, to what they had been told had just taken place, as not much actually happened on stage. The arias were nearly always *da capo*, in three parts with the first part repeated after a contrasting middle section. The singer was expected to show his or her virtuosity and artistry by adding extra ornamentation on the repeat in order to intensify the "affect" or emotional state that the aria expressed.

## Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

Sinfonia in C Major from the opera *Farnace* RV 711

*Allegro*  
*Andante*  
*Allegro molto*

Vivaldi was one of the most successful opera composers in Italy in the first decades of the eighteenth century. His opera composing career covered almost thirty years, from 1713 to 1741, and he spent long periods travelling throughout Italy staging his own operas. He claimed to have written over ninety operas, although so far only forty-nine have been identified, and of those, the scores of only twenty-one have survived. Like Handel, Vivaldi was his own entrepreneur, and managed the Teatro Sant' Angelo in Venice for periods throughout the first decades of the 1700s.

*Farnace* was first performed in Venice in 1727. The major singers were all women. This sinfonia, or short symphony, functioned as the overture. Vivaldi builds excitement from the beginning of the first movement with its rushing semiquavers, and signature rapid octave leaps, which struck his contemporaries as thrillingly innovative.

## Aria "Sorge l'irato nembo" from the opera *Orlando* RV 728

*Orlando* was also composed for Venice in 1727. The male role of Orlando was sung by a woman, Lucia Lancetti, who specialised in "pants" roles, and who had also sung the role of the king in *Farnace*.

The story of *Orlando* comes from an epic poem by the sixteenth century Italian courtier Ludovico Ariosto, which formed the basis for many operas in the early 1700s including Handel's *Alcina*. The setting is an enchanted island, ruled by the wicked enchantress Alcina. In this aria from the second act Orlando tries to convince Ruggiero, a young man who has been bewitched by Alcina, that his wife's anger at his betrayal is like a storm at sea, which will soon be calmed.

This is a "tempest" aria, a device often used in *opera seria* to metaphorically convey a character's emotional turmoil, here depicted by jagged ornaments of the vocal line on the words "agita e confonde". In the orchestra's sudden descending semiquavers which attempt to drown out the voice we hear the fierce winds and sounds of waves in a storm at sea. The middle section of the aria by contrast suggests that calm will follow the emotional storm.

*Sorge l'irato nembo*  
*E la fatal tempesta*  
*Col sussurrar dell'onde,*  
*Ed agita e confonde*  
*E cielo e mar.*

The angry cloud rises  
And the fatal storm  
With the murmur of the waves,  
Agitates and obscures  
The sky and sea.

*Ma fugge in un baleno*  
*L'orrida nube infesta,*  
*E il placido sereno*  
*In cielo appar.*

But in an instant flees  
The terrible haunting clouds,  
And calm serenity  
Appears in the sky.

*Sorge l'irato ...*



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## Aria “Sol da te mio dolce amore” from the opera *Orlando* RV 728

In Act I the enchantress Alcina sees Ruggiero arrive on her island on a hippogriff, and she decides to seduce him. Completely under her spell, he sings this aria, described as “one of the peaks of Vivaldian opera”. The role of Ruggiero was first sung by the castrato Giovanni Tassi. Vivaldi often used solo instruments for special effects, and here the highly florid and virtuosic solo flute part assisted by muted violins adds to the amorous, seductive affect.

*Sol da te mio dolce amore  
Questo core avrà pace, avrà conforto.*

Only through you my sweet love  
Will this heart have peace and comfort.

*Le tue vaghe luci belle son le stelle  
Onde amor mi guida in porto.*

Your charming, beautiful eyes are the stars  
Which guide me into port on waves of love.

*Sol da te ...*

## Concerto for Oboe in C Major RV 450

Soloist: Kirsten Barry baroque oboe

*Allegro molto  
Larghetto  
Allegro*

Vivaldi wrote over three hundred concertos for one solo instrument and string orchestra, including twenty for oboe. Most of the concertos were written for the Pio ospedale della Pietà, the girls’ orphanage in Venice where Vivaldi was employed as music director for much of his career. This concerto, from 1735, is an adaptation by Vivaldi of his bassoon concerto RV471, with the solo passages re-written to suit the higher instrument. Vivaldi re-used an aria from his opera *Griselda* for the first movement.

## George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

### Aria “Where Shall I Fly” from the oratorio *Hercules* HWV 60

From the time Handel had arrived in London, in 1711, his career had been centred on the composition and production of Italian operas, and in this he had been phenomenally successful, with thirty six operas staged between 1711 and 1737. In 1733, however, a rival opera company was set up which poached Handel’s best Italian imported singers and drew the support of wealthy patrons away from Handel’s own company.

Having only English singers at his disposal, and sensing that the London public was beginning to lose its taste for Italian opera, Handel began to introduce oratorios in English into his subscription seasons of Italian opera. Such was their success that by 1739 his season contained only works in English and no operas at all.

Handel took a month to compose *Hercules*, in July and August 1744. Its story was drawn from Greek mythology, and the libretto was based on Sophocles and Ovid. It was originally described as “music drama”. It was neither opera, as it was not intended to be staged, nor oratorio, as the story was

secular instead of biblical. Confused, London audiences were unreceptive and found that it lacked the uplifting morality of the oratorios. It was not a success, receiving only two performances in 1745.

This aria, a “mad scene”, is sung by the character of Dejanaira, Hercules’s jealous wife. Suspecting that he is unfaithful, Dejanaira sends Hercules a robe given to her by the centaur Nessus, just before he was killed by Hercules. Nessus promised that the robe would “revive the expiring flame of love” but instead when Hercules puts it on he is poisoned and dies. Dejanaira is driven mad by guilt and imagines she is pursued by the three Furies, spirits of vengeance in classical mythology. They are depicted as foul and repulsive: Alecto has snakes instead of hair. The “iron beds” are racks, instruments of torture.

*Where shall I fly? Where hide this guilty head?  
Oh fatal error of misguided love!  
Oh cruel Nessus, how thou art revenged!  
Wretched I am! By me Alcides\* dies!  
These impious hands have sent my injured lord untimely to the shades!  
Let me be mad! Chain me, ye furies, to your iron beds,  
And lash my guilty ghost with whips of scorpions!*

*See! See! They come! Alecto with her snakes! Megaera fell, and black Tisiphone!*

*See the dreadful sisters rise! Their baneful presence taints the skies!  
See, see the snaky whips they bear! What yellings rend my tortured ear!  
Hide me, hide me from their hated sight,  
Friendly shades of blackest night.  
Hide me, hide me, friendly shades!*

*See, see the dreadful sisters rise! Their baneful presence taints the skies!*

*Alas! no rest the guilty find  
From the pursuing furies of the mind.*

\* Alcides is another name for Hercules

### INTERVAL ~

Program notes continue on page 16.

# Haunting Handel

YEAR	HANDEL'S LIFE AND CAREER	VIVALDI'S LIFE AND CAREER	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1678		Born in Venice	
1685	Born in Halle, Germany		JS Bach and Domenico Scarlatti born
1703		Appointed violin teacher at the Pietà girls' orphanage in Venice	
1706	Travels to Rome and Florence		
1710	Appointed music director to the Elector of Hanover; makes first visit to London		
1711	First London opera <i>Rinaldo</i> performed	Renowned as virtuoso violinist & composer after publication of twelve concertos, <i>L'estro armonico</i>	War between settlers and native Americans in North Carolina
1713	Dismissed from the court of Hanover; granted annual pension by Queen Anne of Great Britain	First opera <i>Ottone in villa</i> performed in Vicenza	
1714			Queen Anne dies; the Elector of Hanover is proclaimed George I, King of Great Britain and Ireland
1717	Composes <i>Water Musick</i> to accompany King George I on the River Thames		
1721			JS Bach dedicates a set of concertos to the Margrave of Brandenburg

YEAR	HANDEL'S LIFE AND CAREER	VIVALDI'S LIFE AND CAREER	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1724	Premiere of opera <i>Giulio Cesare</i>	Opera <i>Il Giustino</i> premieres in Rome	First performance of JS Bach's <i>St John Passion</i> in Leipzig
1725		<i>Four Seasons</i> published	
1727	Composes <i>Zadok the Priest</i> for the coronation of George II; becomes a British subject	Operas <i>Farnace</i> and <i>Orlando furioso</i> premiere in Venice	First performance of JS Bach's <i>St Matthew Passion</i> in Leipzig
1734	Opus 3 <i>Concerti grossi</i> published	Oboe concerto composed	
1735	Premiere of <i>Alcina</i> and <i>Ariodante</i>		
1738	Premiere of <i>Serse</i>		
1741	Gives last performance of Italian opera	Dies poor and alone in Vienna, aged 63; is given a pauper's burial	
1742	First performance of <i>Messiah</i>		Celsius devises centigrade thermometer
1744	First performance of <i>Hercules</i>		
1750			JS Bach dies
1751	Begins to go blind; almost totally blind by 1753		
1759	Dies on 14 April, buried in Westminster Abbey. 3000 people attend his funeral		Mozart is aged 3, Haydn is 27





# Haunting Handel

## Overture to the opera *Giulio Cesare* (Julius Caesar) HWV 17

*Giulio Cesare* is considered one of the greatest of Handel's operas. It premiered in London in 1724. Handel's overtures are usually in the French style and this is no exception, so a majestic slow first section is followed by a lively fugal second section. An inveterate borrower of his own (and sometimes others') work, Handel had previously used the second section in the overture to his opera *Ottone*. The overture contains no references to other music in the opera. It was only in the nineteenth century that the overture became part of the dramatic narrative.

## Aria “Mi lusinga a dolce affetto” from the opera *Alcina* HWV 34

*Alcina* falls into the category of a “magic” opera, but Handel turns it into something far greater through music which depicts the humanity of the characters. The role of Ruggiero was created for the famous castrato Carestini.

In Act I Ruggiero has been in love with the enchantress Alcina. In Act II he is released from her spell and recognises his true love Bradamante, but nonetheless he suspects her of being a phantom conjured by Alcina. Bradamante responds angrily, and in this aria Ruggiero starts to doubt himself, his state of mind reflected by the sequences of gentle leaps in the melody.

<i>Mi lusinga a dolce affetto Con l'aspetto del mio bene. Pur chi sà? Temer conviene, Che m'inganni amando ancor.</i>	I am charmed by the sweet affection Of the face of my beloved. But who knows? To fear is prudent, As I would make a mistake by falling in love again.
<i>Ma se quella fosse mai Che adorai, e l'abbandono? Infedele, ingrato io sono. Son crudele e traditor.</i>	But what if this woman were really The one I adored, and abandoned? Unfaithful, ungrateful am I. I am cruel and a traitor.

*Mi lusinga da capo.*

## Aria “Se bramate d'amar” from the opera *Serse* (Xerxes) HWV 40

<b>The contexture of this Drama is so very easy, that it wou'd be troubling the reader to give him a long argument to explain it. Some imbicillities, and the temerity of Xerxes (such as his being deeply enamour'd with a plane tree, and the building a bridge over the Hellespont to unite Asia to Europe) are the basis of the story; the rest is fiction.</b>	<b>Introduction to the original libretto, 1738</b>
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*Serse* was one of Handel's last operas, and in many respects it is not an *opera seria* at all but unusually for Handel, a tragic-comedy. He took rather longer than usual to compose it – six weeks – and it premiered on 15th April 1738. It was not popular with audiences or critics, receiving only five performances, after which it was not revived in its original form until 1985. The eighteenth century music historian Charles Burney thought the libretto's “buffoonery” and “feeble writing” made it “one of the worst Handel ever set to Music”. Now it is regarded as one of Handel's masterpieces.

The role of *Serse* (Xerxes), King of Persia, was first sung by the alto Cafarelli, one of the most famous of the castrati. He was famous not just for his virtuosic singing but for his temperamental behaviour. In 1741 he was put under house arrest for making obscene gestures at the audience – and for refusing to join in ensembles!

*Serse* is depicted as both pompous and vain, but Handel's music invests him with real emotion. *Serse* is in love with Romilda, but she is in love with his brother Arsamene. When *Serse* shows Romilda a letter which apparently proves that Arsamene loves her sister instead, he is enraged that Romilda continues to reject him.

Handel brilliantly depicts *Serse*'s character in this aria. The vocal line in the first section is grand and authoritative, but the sudden adagios convey his self-doubt.

<i>Se bramate d'amar, chi vi sdeгна, Vuò sdegnarvi, Ma come, non sò.</i>	If you would adore the man who has spurned you, I should renounce you. But truly, I don't know how to.
<i>La vostra ira crudel me l'insegna, Tento farlo, e quest' alma non può.</i>	Your cruel anger shows me how and I would try to do it, but this soul cannot.
<i>Se bramate d'amar ...</i>	

## Concerto Grosso Opus 3 No 2 (HWV 313)

**Vivace  
Largo  
Allegro  
Minuet  
Gavotte**

Handel's Opus 3 *concerti grossi* were published in 1734, and were known as the oboe concertos because of the inclusion of that instrument in the scores of all the concerti. Unlike his Opus 6 *concerti grossi*, which Handel intended as a set, the concerti which appeared as Opus 3 had been composed mostly in the 1710s and were apparently gathered together hurriedly by Handel's publisher to cash in on his success. It was in fact so hastily done that a concerto by some other anonymous composer was mistakenly included in the first edition as No 4. Apparently at Handel's insistence, this was corrected in a new edition which appeared a few months later.

The term “concerto” had been used since the late 1600s to refer to any “concerted” piece played by an ensemble, large or small, but by the end of the seventeenth century a “concerto grosso” was understood to be a composition which used a small ensemble of solo instruments (called the “concertino”) contrasting with a larger contingent of accompanying players (the full orchestra or “ripieno”). The Italian composer Arcangelo Corelli's *concerti grossi* were greatly admired in England and considered the benchmark for all other composers, but Handel inevitably placed his own stamp upon the genre.

This concerto features oboes and bassoon among the solo instruments. The second movement is built around a strikingly beautiful melody for oboe, accompanied by two solo cellos. The third movement Handel borrowed from himself, having used it twice before. The last movement takes the form of a set of variations.

## Aria “Lascia ch'io pianga” from the opera *Rinaldo* HWV 7

The opera *Rinaldo* was composed soon after Handel's arrival in London from Germany in 1710, when he was only twenty six. It was the first Italian opera written specifically for the London stage and it was a sensation – brilliant and dramatic music combining with never-before seen staging and special effects: “thunder and lightning, illuminations and fireworks ... painted dragons spitting wildfire, enchanted chariots drawn by Flanders mares, and real cascades in artificial landscapes”. There were live sheep and oxen on stage and in



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the middle of the performance flights of sparrows were let loose, which took up residence in the theatre and appeared in other productions at inopportune moments, “besides the Inconveniences which the Heads of the Audience may sometimes suffer from them.”

*Rinaldo* is set in the time of the Crusades and the action mostly takes place outside the walls of Jerusalem, which the Christian army led by Rinaldo is besieging. The plot is a curious mix of history and fairy tale, and the cast includes a sorceress, a siren, and mermaids, spirits and fairies. The setting also includes a magic mountain, a rock surrounded by a turbulent sea, and an enchanted garden.

Rinaldo's fiancé Almirena has been abducted by a wicked enchantress, Armida Queen of Damascus and mistress of the Saracen king, as a pawn to capture Rinaldo.

**... a black Cloud descends, all fill'd with dreadful Monsters spitting Fire and Smoke on every side. The Cloud covers Almirena and Armida, and carries 'em up swiftly into the Air, leaving in their Place, two frightful Furies, who having grinn'd and mock'd Rinaldo, sink down, and disappear ...**

Stage direction in the original libretto from 1711

“Lascia ch'io pianga” is sung by the captive Almirena in Armida's palace. Its simple, emotional intensity has made it one of Handel's most enduring arias.

*Lascia ch'io pianga mia cruda sorte,  
E che sospiri la libertà.*

Let me mourn my cruel fate,  
And sigh for liberty.

*Il duolo infranga queste ritorte  
De miei martiri,  
Sol per pietà.*

May sadness shatter these chains  
Of my suffering,  
If only out of pity.

*Lascia ch'io pianga ...*

## Aria “Dopo notte” from the opera *Ariodante*, HWV 33

*Ariodante* contains some of Handel's finest and most virtuosic writing for solo voice. Like *Alcina* and *Orlando* its story is drawn from Ariosto's poem. Oddly, it is set in Edinburgh, but there is nothing remotely Scottish about either plot or music. Of all Handel's operas it has the most straightforward and plausible storyline, likely to make it accessible to modern audiences.

Ariodante, a prince, is betrothed to Ginevra, daughter of the King of Scotland. This aria comes at the end of the opera and celebrates a happy ending after jealousy, betrayal, and false accusations. This aria is full of energy, with flashy coloratura, and wild leaps in violins. The role of Ariodante was first sung by the castrato Carestini and Handel exploited his range in this aria, requiring the singer to jump from the very top to the very bottom of the range.

*Dopo notte, atra e funesta,  
Splende in ciel più vago il sole,  
E di gioia empie la terra.*

After night, dark and gloomy,  
the sun shines in the sky more lovely than ever,  
And joy fills the earth.

*Mentre in orrida tempesta  
Il mio legno è quasi assorto;  
Giunge in porto, e il lido afferra.*

In a terrible storm  
My boat is almost capsized;  
It arrives in the harbour, and reaches the shore.

